



# TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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## **EMC RESOLUTION NO.6 – RECOMMENDING PRESERVATION OF THE CORNELL REDBUD WOODS:**

*Whereas*, Cornell University plans to construct a parking lot for 175 cars in the Redbud Woods and lawn of the Treman Estate in the University Hill section of Ithaca, NY as part of its West Campus Residential Initiative (WCRI). This would require over an acre and a half of new pavement, more than enough to cover a football field; and

*Whereas*, the site currently provides a green buffer, including a small woods and a large lawn between Cornell University and a residential neighborhood in the City of Ithaca. The Redbud Woods is a home to diverse species including the locally rare yellow oak and hackberry trees and provides habitat for up to three species of butterfly that feed exclusively on hackberries and require undisturbed forest litter for their survival, and it is a valuable site for teaching and ecological research; and

*Whereas*, the Treman Estate was designed by the noted landscape architect Warren Manning and was once home to Robert H. Treman a famed conservationist of the region and donor of Robert H. Treman State Park and, in the professional opinion of representatives of Historic Ithaca, a parking lot in the Redbud Woods and on the Treman lawn would destroy the historic character of the area; and

*Whereas*, The Cornell University's West Campus Residential Initiative Environmental Impact Statement identified several alternative parking solutions and the light and noise impacts of a large parking lot in the center of the University Hill neighborhood would significantly diminish the quality of life of area residents; and

*Whereas*, Cornell University President Jeffrey Lehman has repeatedly stressed his desire to improve relations between the University and the local community, which has actively opposed the planned parking lot; and

*Whereas*, the City of Ithaca Planning and Development Board initially voted 5-2 against granting Cornell University site plan approval for the parking lot, finding that the lot "will have significant adverse environmental impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods" and "that the impacts can be more successfully mitigated by accommodating the parking needs of the WCRI project in another location." After a lawsuit, the New York State Supreme Court compelled the Board to approve Cornell's site plan for the parking lot. Many Board members favored appealing the Court decision but were prevented from doing so by the Board's own Counsel's refusal to represent them; and

*Whereas*, the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission met for five hours on November 13, 2003 and recessed without passing any judgment on Cornell University's application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, required for a parking lot on the site pursuant to its historic designation, in part because nearly one hundred students and local residents convened at the public hearing to voice disapproval of the parking lot; and

*Whereas*, the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council reviews development projects, researches environmental issues, conducts educational programs, and provides specific and detailed information to the public about the natural resources of Tompkins County, ***now therefore be it***

***Resolved***, that in accordance with opposition to Cornell University's plans to replace the Redbud Woods and much of the landscape of the Treman Estate with a 175-space parking lot, the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council urges Cornell to:

- i. cancel plans for the University Avenue parking lot,
- ii. reconsider all alternative transportation plans—which include but are not limited to a parking garage at Stewart Avenue and Williams Street, underground parking beneath the new West Campus Residence Halls, and a reduction in the overall number of parking spaces on campus coupled with a return to restrictions on parking permits for first year students—with all deliberate speed, and
- iii. assemble a taskforce comprised of administrators, faculty, concerned students, and local residents to update Cornell's approach toward accommodating cars and create a community-spirited and ecologically sound transportation policy for the University.

Date: December 10, 2003

Vote: 15 Aye  
0 Nay  
1 Abstention